

# General Management Plan Preferred Alternative / Trails Plan Scoping

Newsletter Four  
February 2006

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Saguaro National Park  
Arizona



## Dear Friends,

I'd like to update you on our ongoing planning efforts at Saguaro National Park, and to let you know how we are moving forward to create a vision for the park while addressing critical issues. We have developed what we believe is our preferred vision, or "preferred alternative", in the General Management Plan (GMP). We are also committed to moving forward to achieve that vision by beginning the trails plan.

First, I would like to update you on the General Management Plan process. This newsletter gives you a "preview" of what the park believes will be the GMP preferred alternative. It includes zoning maps for the Tucson Mountain and the Rincon Mountain units, a description of the management zones, and description of the preferred alternative. Keep in mind that this is not the draft GMP with its associated Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The draft GMP/EIS will be released this summer, will include all the alternatives considered, and will include an environmental analysis of all alternatives. However, this newsletter gives you an additional chance to comment on the GMP preferred alternative. You may comment now using the comment card in this newsletter, or you may wait and comment when the draft GMP/EIS is released this summer. Be assured that if you are receiving this newsletter, you will be notified when the draft GMP/EIS is available for public review.

Now I'd like to update you on the trails plan. By releasing the GMP preferred alternative at this time, we now have an overall park vision that we can carry into the trails planning process. To begin the trails planning process, we would like to hear from you so we can begin to address trails issues through this important plan. The comment card in this newsletter serves an opportunity for you to comment on the trails plan as well. If you would like to review previous newsletters on the GMP process, please go to:

<http://parkplanning.nps.gov> and select Saguaro National Park. Then click on Saguaro National Park General Management Plan.

Sincerely,

Sarah Craighead  
Superintendent

## GENERAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

### Selecting the Preferred Alternative

The General Management Plan alternatives were considered with a number of different elements, including comments received on the alternatives newsletter and during public and partner workshops, and a preliminary analysis of potential impacts. With these and other elements in mind, the preferred alternative was chosen by the National Park Service through a process called Choosing by Advantages. Choosing by Advantages, or "CBA" is a logical, trackable decision-making process that allows evaluation of the relationship between results and costs to identify the alternative with the greatest value in accomplishing National Park Service functional goals and objectives. Developed for use in the public agency decision-making environment, CBA focuses on the advantages between alternatives, and determines the importance of those advantages based on the park's purpose and related public interest. In using the CBA process, the National Park Service asks itself "What are the advantages of each alternative proposed for consideration? How important are these advantages?" and finally "Are those advantages worth their associated cost?"

Some of the topics that the interdisciplinary team looked at to evaluate the relative advantages between alternatives included the ability of the alternatives to protect ecological habitats, riparian corridors, cultural resources, and opportunities for solitude; ways to improve visitor access, the range of recreational opportunities, interpretation and education services, efficiency of administrative operations; and the potential for partnerships.

Alternative two scored highest with the greatest number of important advantages, and alternative three was second. Since some aspects of alternative three scored higher than alternative two, the planning team added some of those advantages to alternative two. Some zoning changes were made to alternative two to create the preferred alternative.



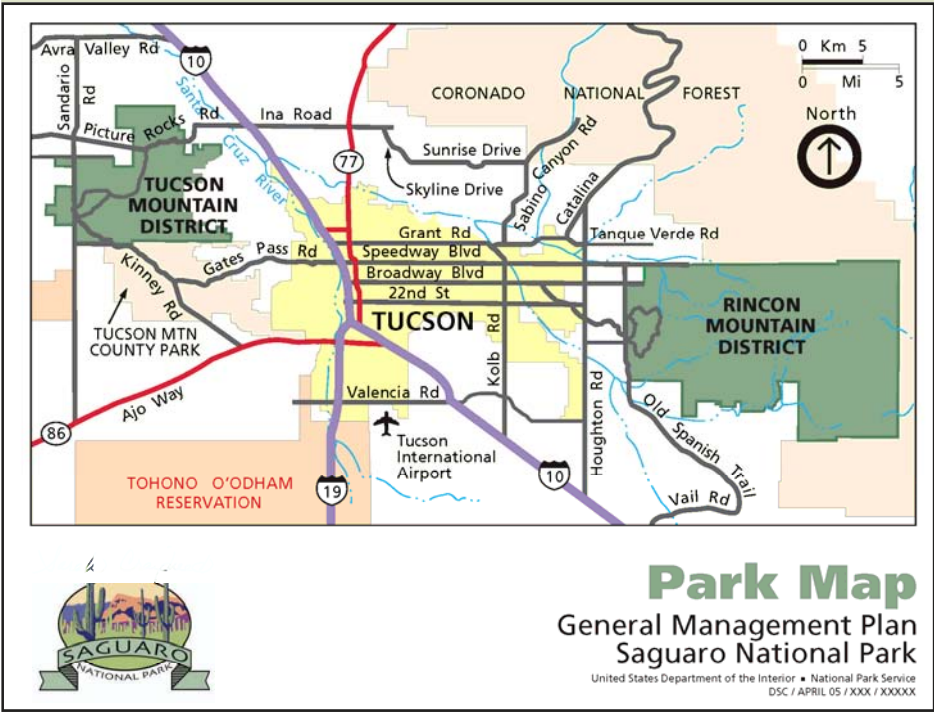
### The Preferred Alternative

#### Concept

In alternative 2 the emphasis would be on protecting the park's ecological processes and biological diversity by connecting wildlife and plant habitats. Management efforts would focus on creating connections between isolated wildlife habitats and corridors. Park managers would make choices and take actions that would best achieve ecological/biological diversity. Visitation would be managed and redirected, when necessary, to protect sensitive resources and minimize impacts on resources. Basic facilities for visitor safety and services would be provided inside the park. Appropriate access would be provided for visitors to enjoy the park and learn about the Sonoran Desert and associated habitat.

#### Rationale

This alternative concept was developed because the biological diversity and ecological processes of the park — remarkable due to the range of elevation and mix of riparian and desert habitats — are in danger from habitat fragmentation. In addition, the public expressed concern that overuse of the park and increasing urbanization would threaten the park's qualities of solitude, quiet, and naturalness. This alternative would help mitigate the effects of habitat fragmentation while adaptively managing for recreational opportunities consistent with conserving natural resources and protecting wilderness areas.





Resource Conditions

- Primitive and Semi- primitive zones, which call for natural resources to be maintained in pristine to excellent condition, would make up the largest area of the park. Tolerance for resource modifications or degradation would be low, and preservation of wildlife habitat would be a major management focus in these zones. Park management would seek to reduce fragmentation of habitats and isolated wildlife corridors. Revegetation efforts would increase to improve habitat conditions.
- Inventories would be conducted to identify and evaluate cultural resources and nominate appropriate sites to the National Register of Historic Places. Cultural resources that are on or eligible for the national register would be preserved and maintained. Specifically, Cactus Forest Drive in the Rincon Mountain District, which was designed and built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), would



continue as a sightseeing road, preserving its cultural landscape. In addition, the CCC camp area in the Tucson Mountain District would continue to be preserved, and a few trails with signs and wayside exhibits in the area could be added to facilitate and manage visitor access to the area. Occasional ranger- led tours to off- trail historic sites could also be provided.

Road Management

Park staff would continue to monitor and mitigate wildlife mortality along road corridors in both districts.

Tucson Mountain District

- Golden Gate Road (between Ez- Kim- In- Zin picnic area and Picture Rocks Road) would be placed in the Natural Zone, and the road would be converted to a multiuse trail.
- Picture Rocks Road would be placed in the Sightseeing Corridor Zone. The desired visitor experience and resource conditions for this road would be achieved by installing a number of traffic- calming devices, including trail crossings, park entrance features, curbs and gutters, digital speed display signs, and increased enforcement of speed limits. The park staff would then continue monitoring visitor safety and resource conditions along the roads to determine if any additional road management applications were necessary. Those additional applications would include features such as entrance stations. If additional management strategies do not sufficiently mitigate impacts to resources and visitor experiences, the park staff would then encourage and work with Pima County to find other alternatives to using Picture Rocks Road.
- Kinney and Sandario roads would be placed in the Sightseeing Corridor Zone.
- The Hohokam Road would be redesigned into a narrower, paved, one- way scenic loop. As with current management, this road would continue to be closed at night. Opportunities would be explored to create a closed loop to improve safety conditions along Sandario Road.

Rincon Mountain District

- The Cactus Forest Loop Drive would continue as a motor tour route and be placed in the Sightseeing Corridor Zone.

Trail Management

A comprehensive trails plan would be developed (this project is currently underway) to fully address trail locations, designs, and types responding to the overall direction provided in the general management plan. The comprehensive trails plan would contain the details for the actions proposed in this alternative .

Tucson Mountain District

- Trailhead parking would be developed at both ends of the proposed Golden Gate Trail. Opportunities for developing bicycling trails would be explored along the gas pipeline right- of- way near the eastern boundary of the district. Redesign of the Kings Canyon trailhead would be explored.

- The Natural Zone near the Valley View Overlook as well as the Natural Zone east of Sandario Road and south of Kinney Road would be considered for development of new accessible paved trails.
- The Natural Zone in the northwest section of land west of Sandario would be considered for interpretive trails and signage to be developed near the CCC camp.

Rincon Mountain District

- Biking opportunities would be explored along the Hope Camp Trail.
- The Camino Loma Alta trailhead would be improved.
- The Douglas Springs, Wildhorse, and Broadway trailheads would be redesigned/ improved.
- Development of additional wheelchair accessible trails would be explored.
- The Natural Zone within the Cactus Forest Loop Drive would be considered to allow for exploration of additional ADA accessible nature trails.

Parkwide Trails

- Off- trail travel below 5,000 feet would be restricted to protect cultural and natural resources.
- Regional trail connections would be explored in conjunction with partners. The location of regional trail connections would be identified as part of the comprehensive trails plan.
- The location of trail access points and possible trailheads would be identified.
- The need for single- use trails to reduce trail user conflicts would be assessed as part of the comprehensive trails plan.

Management of Madrona (Rincon Mountain District)

- Visitor use at Madrona would continue to be highly regulated to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. The area would be systematically monitored as part of the park’s user capacity and biological monitoring program. The park would implement a limited permit system if visitor use impacts indicate that further regulations on use levels were needed.
- The historic fireplace with chimney (chimenea) would be monitored and stabilized.
- The historic Civilian Aeronautical Administration building would be donated to an interested organization. If no interest was expressed, the structure would be documented and razed.
- Staff housing and new corrals would be developed and appropriately located to minimize impacts to resources. Utilities and associated support systems would be upgraded as necessary.

Manning Camp (Rincon Mountain District)

- Fire management and trail maintenance staging activities would be simplified.
- A comprehensive analysis would be conducted to identify the most efficient operation for fire and trail operational activities.
- The park staff would develop a shared work center/duty station with the U.S. Forest Service for initial fire response.
- Some administrative facilities would remain, such as the vault toilet, water system, corrals, and hitching posts.
- The number of tent platforms and propane equipment would be reduced.
- Seasonal spike camps would be set up for trail maintenance activities when these needs are a considerable distance from Manning Camp.
- The recommendations of the *Manning Cabin Condition Assessment* (August 2005) would be implemented to protect the cabin’s historic fabric. These recommendations include rehabilitating and monitoring the cabin, reducing the amount of supplies and equipment stored inside, and moving propane tanks away from the exterior walls.
- Ranger presence would be maintained during the summer season for interpretation, law enforcement, initial fire response, and routine maintenance.

Camping Management

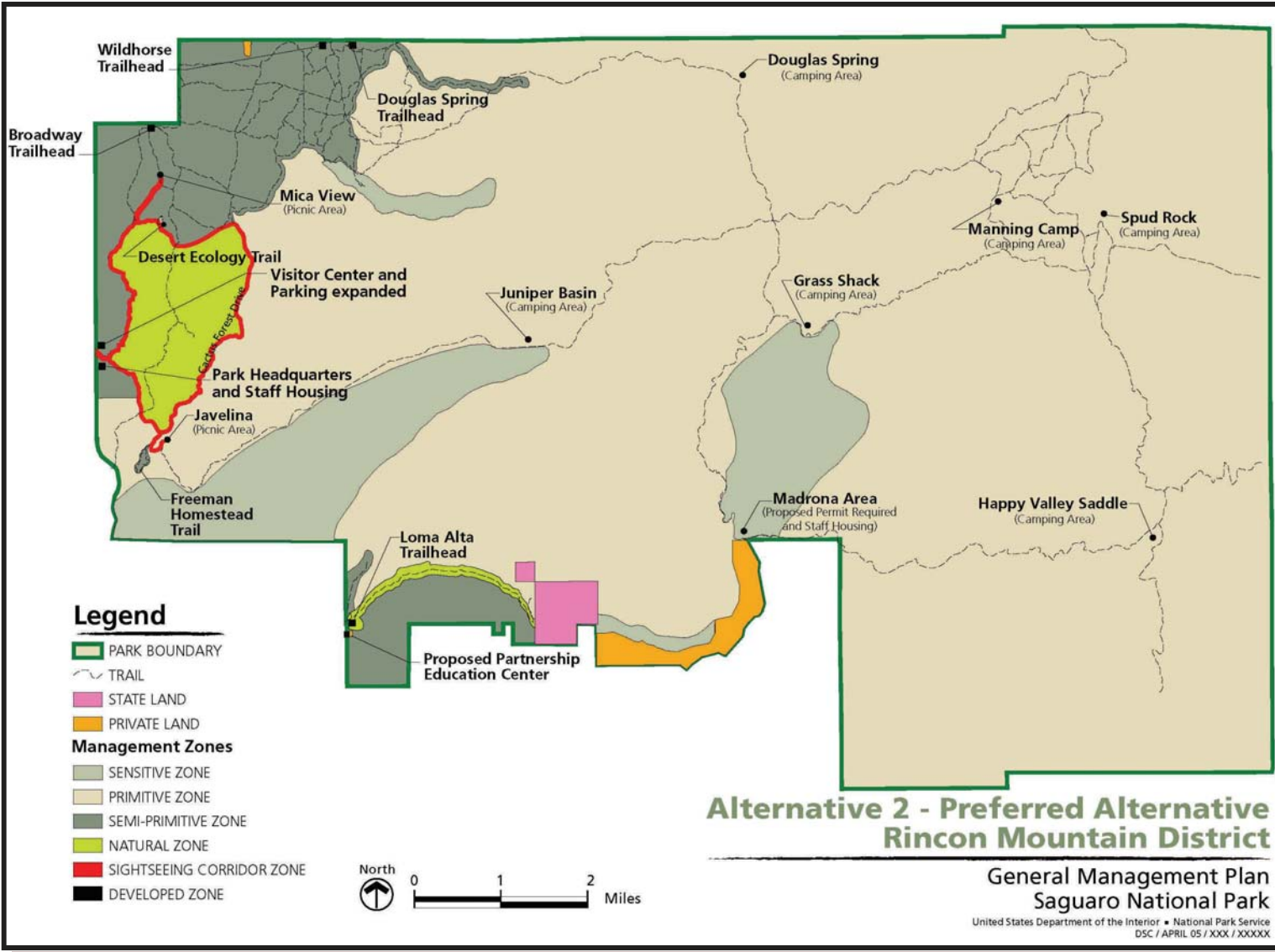
- Camping opportunities in the Rincon Mountain District would take place in designated campsites, and camping would not be allowed in the Tucson Mountain District as is currently the case.

Interpretation and Education

- The Rincon Mountain District visitor center would be expanded to provide additional exhibit space. The Tucson Mountain District visitor center would remain the same.
- An environmental education center would be developed at the south boundary of the Rincon Mountain District (in the vicinity of the Camino Loma Alta trailhead) as partners and funding became available.
- A park structure would be reused as an education center when current uses are relocated.

Management Activities and Facilities

- The annex building in the headquarters complex would be removed when its administrative functions can be moved to other locations, e.g., additional administrative space in the Rincon Mountain District visitor center and/or converted park housing.

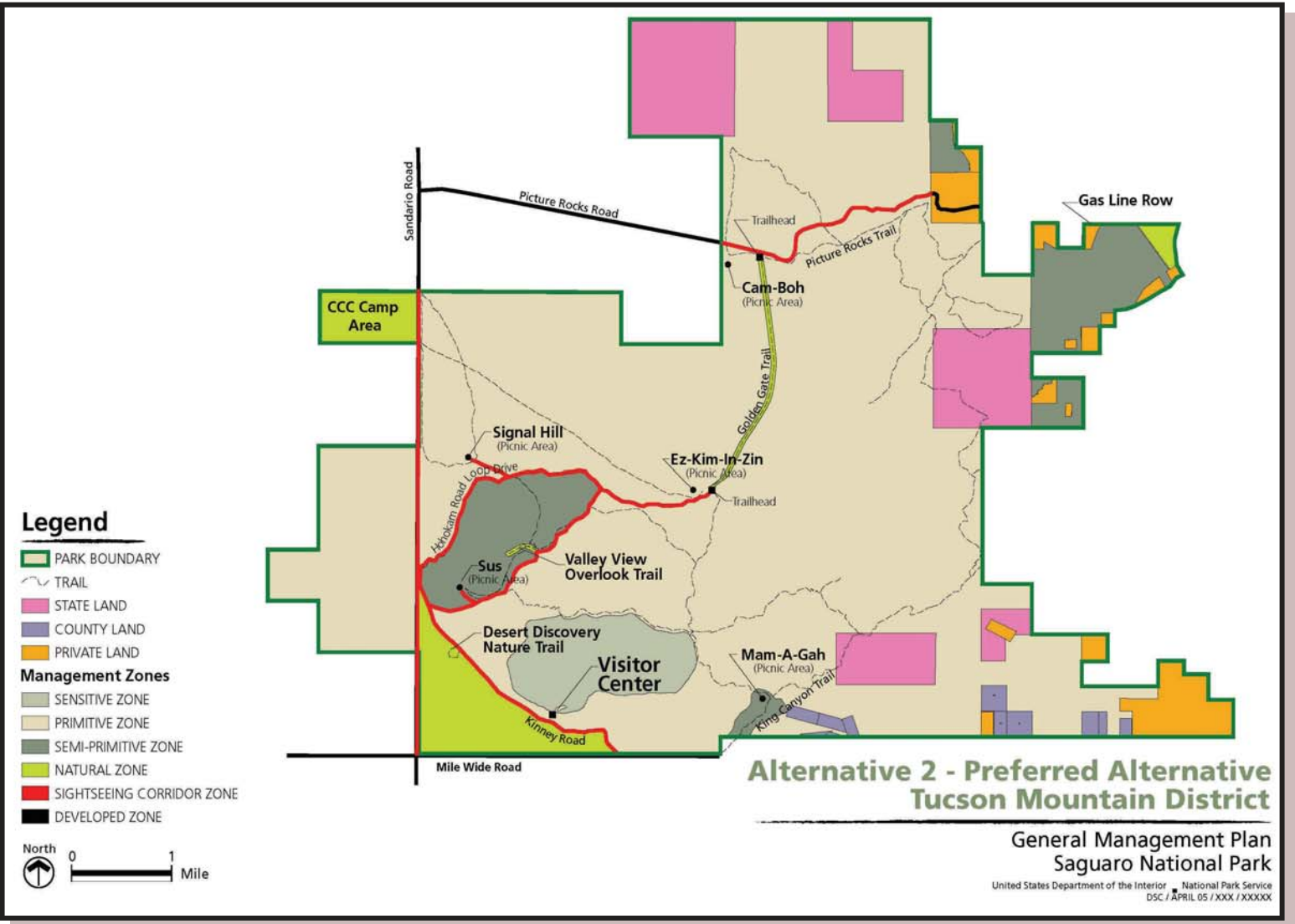




- State Trust, county, and private lands within park boundaries would be acquired from willing sellers when available and feasible.

Partnerships

- The park staff would continue to have relationships with its partners. These partnerships include universities, colleges, schools, institutes, friends groups, and other organizations.
- Additional partnerships would be sought with city and county entities to make regional trail connections.
- Partnerships would be sought to develop an environmental education center at the south boundary of the Rincon Mountain District (in the vicinity of the Camino Loma Alta trailhead).



MANAGEMENT ZONES SUMMARY						
	Sensitive Resource Protection Zone	Primitive Zone	Semi-primitive Zone	Natural Zone	Sightseeing Corridor Zone	Developed Zone
Resource Condition	Pristine resource conditions. Protect fragile and unique resources.	Pristine resource conditions. Protect natural processes, biodiversity, and the ecosystem.	Pristine to excellent resource conditions. Protect natural processes, biodiversity, and the ecosystem.	Good to excellent resource conditions. Maintain the natural setting. Protect natural resources to the highest level possible.	Low to moderate modification of resources for visitor use and safety. Protect but mitigate impacts on natural resources as necessary.	Moderate to high modification of resources to provide visitor and administrative services. Protect but mitigate impacts on natural resources as necessary.
Visitor Experience	Research opportunities. Public access via ranger-led tour only.	Primitive recreational opportunities with low visitor use. Hiking, horseback riding, and camping in designated sites offer solitude, challenge, adventure, and discovery. Remote, difficult to access.	Primitive recreational opportunities with low to moderate visitor use. Walking, hiking, and horseback riding offer some solitude and a sense of being close to nature. Sights and sounds of nearby human activity might intrude.	Diverse recreational opportunities. Walking, hiking, biking, horseback riding, picnicking, interpretive trails offer an opportunity to observe and enjoy the natural environment. Sights and signs of people might be present.	Scenic touring opportunities offered. Access and links for biking, horseback riding, motorized vehicles, walking, and hiking. Offers a safe, unhurried, pleasant, and educational experience while traveling along park corridors.	Orientation, interpretation, education, support services, and close interaction with park staff. High visitor use.
Facilities	None, except where absolutely essential for resource protection or visitor safety.	Minimal — unpaved trails, directional and safety signs, trail markings, and backcountry campgrounds.	Minimal to moderate — unpaved trails along with directional and safety signs.	Moderate — paved and unpaved trails, interpretive signs, and picnic areas.	Moderate to high — paved and unpaved roads and trails, pullouts, overlooks, interpretive signs, and traffic-calming devices.	High for visitor services — visitor centers, administration buildings, paved and unpaved interpretive trails, kiosks, parking areas, trailheads, and picnic areas.
Management	Lowest visitation and management activity levels.	Lowest visitation and management activity levels.	Low to moderate visitation and moderate management activities.	Moderate visitation and moderate management activities.	Highest visitation and management activity levels.	Highest visitation and management activity levels.

CULTURAL RESOURCES PARKWIDE MANAGEMENT ZONE		
Resource Condition	Visitor Experience	Level of Management and Facilities
Cultural resources that are on or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places would be preserved and maintained and might be adaptively used. Cultural resources potentially eligible for listing in the national register would continue to be evaluated for formal determinations of eligibility and possible national register nominations.	Visitors would have opportunities to learn about and see the cultural resources of the park. These resources might include structures, landscapes, archeological sites, rock art, or special historic-period districts. Visitor “discovery” sites might be enhanced with interpretive signs.	Inventories would be conducted to identify and evaluate cultural resources and nominate appropriate sites to the National Register of Historic Places. Monitoring sensitive cultural resources, such as historic structures, prehistoric rock art, and village sites and rock shelters, might result in documentation, stabilization, or hazard abatement. Required compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act would be met for all undertakings. Some historic structures might be adapted to accommodate visitor or administrative uses.

TRAILS PLAN

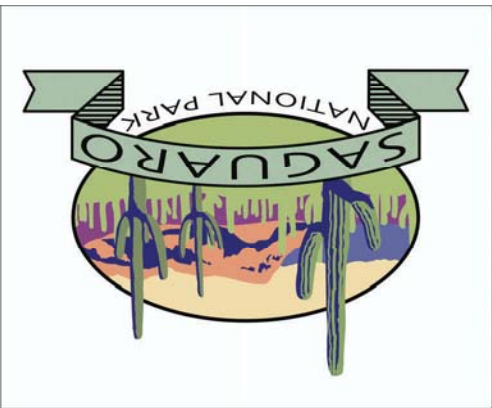
The front section of this newsletter presents the preferred alternative of the draft General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP provides the necessary foundation for the trails plan, including a park vision, park purpose and significance, overall goals and objectives, management zoning, and trail classifications permissible in each zone. The trails plan will provide implementation details regarding appropriate trail location, including trail addition and deletion; amount and type of use; materials; width; and signage. The plan will also include the location of new and existing trailheads and trailhead parking lots. Objectives for the trails plan were also established in the draft General Management Plan (see newsletter #3, May 2005). Those objectives are as follows:

- Protect natural and cultural resources
- Provide reasonable access to the trails network and trailheads

- Eliminate unnecessary and parallel/duplicate trails
- Ensure that the resulting trails network is safe and maintainable
- Provide for a clearly designated trail system
- Provide for a variety of trail experiences.

On the back of this newsletter is a general timeline of how the General Management Plan and the trails plan will proceed. Please help us begin the trails planning effort by providing your comments on the enclosed comment sheet. Please feel free to attach additional pages if necessary.





OFFICIAL BUSINESS  
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE \$300

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Tucson, Arizona 85730-5601

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P L A N N I N G   T I M E L I N E		
General Management Plan		Trails Plan
Alternatives Developed	SPRING 2004	
Public Meetings & Newsletter	SPRING-SUMMER 2005	
Preferred Alternative Selected	FALL 2005	
Internal Draft Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement	SPRING 2006	Scoping/Data Collection
Draft Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for Public Review	SUMMER 2006	Public Involvement, Alternatives Developed
Final Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for Public Review	WINTER 2006	Draft Trails Plan for Public Review
Printed Final Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement	SPRING 2007	Final Trails Plan